

# EDGAR ALLAN POE

The Man, The Master, The Martyr

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Leigh

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THE TRANSPUSABLE PORTRAIT, page 11.

*Was it not Fate (whose name is also *Sorrow*)?*  
—“*To Helen*.”





*The Dilettante Series, I.*

# EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE MAN : THE MASTER : THE MARTYR

By OLIVER LEIGH  
[“Geoffrey Quarles”]

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*PORTRAITS*

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CHICAGO  
THE FRANK M. MORRIS CO.  
1906

D  
~~Ed~~

5170

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*First Edition, May, 1906*  

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# I

## NOTES

### ON THE PORTRAITS OF POE

There are six or seven faces of Poe which are actually portraits, and perhaps a score of masks, that conceal or disfigure the original, and all these have been careering through the book world to the confusion of the trustful reader. The former are Daguerreotype photographs, and therefore as reliable as sun pictures are supposed to be, which is not saying much. The others are hand copies by painters and engravers, who usually improve, more or less, upon their model, not always to the gain of the original. Pretty pictures are one thing, and character portraits quite another. Fashion favors the picture rather than the mirroring. This latter is the aim of the present portrayer, who, needless to confess, is an entirely untrained dabbler with the pencil, with no plea to offset the artistic criticisms of the scornful.

My finding of the "Lavante" satire while rummaging, as a stranger, among the catalogues of the Astor Library in New York (see page 18) led to renewed interest in everything concerning Poe, his character and career. The duality of his nature had long exercised the wits of one addicted

to the "science" of bumpology in his teens, under the bewitchment of an American "Professor" or two in England. In the fervour of that search over "Lavante" involving study of all available portraits of Poe, it occurred to me to make an experiment with one of them, which had appeared in, I believe, the *Scribner* magazine which became the *Century*. The result of that experiment is seen in the Transposable (not composite) Portrait which forms the frontispiece.

*The  
unlevel-  
headed.*

Few faces correspond exactly in each half, but fewer still are so pronouncedly irregular as Poe's. Some of his biographers, as will be seen, would have jumped at my little trick in physiognomical analysis as proof positive that his character was crooked, his genius malformed, and his habits askew. He shared this peculiarity, however, with a remarkable and a good, if not quite a great man, William Ewart Gladstone. Many years ago, when the great politician was in his prime, I read a letter he had written to the person who showed it to me, in which he remarked on the irregularity of his cranium. The protuberances, I think he called them, on the right half were matched by depressions or plains on the left. This appeared to have somewhat puzzled their owner, but contemporary phrenolojocose politicians might have imagined some mystical light thrown by such a trifling fact upon a checkered career.

I showed my transposable portrait to Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, who had honoured me

with his friendship, eager to hear the opinion of one of the poets of distinction whose work in prose will survive much of the poetry of his contemporaries, and deservedly so for its scholarly qualities, sympathetic insight, and artistic charm. He asked me to make a replica for him, a sanction highly gratifying. Years later I read in one of the monthlies an account of one of Mr. Stedman's literary receptions at which this thing much interested the writer. I had made known my intention to Mr. Stedman of some day using the portrait-study in my long contemplated volume on Poe, as yet unfinished.

*The  
Trans-  
posable  
face.*

In his work, "The Poets of America," Mr. Stedman has a masterly study of Poe, from which I take leave to quote the following passages:

"As we drive out of mind the popular conceptions of his nature, and look only at the portraits of him in the flesh, we needs must pause and contemplate, thoughtfully and with renewed feeling, one of the marked ideal faces that seem—like those of Byron, De Musset, Heine—to fulfil all the traditions of genius, of picturesqueness, of literary and romantic effect."

If, when the reader has perused my pages on the "Biographers and Censors" of Poe, he should think the comments lacking in reverence for living genius, I only bid him compare their heads and faces with Poe's, in the light of these extracts:

"We see (in the earlier portraits) the handsome, intellectual face....the head finely modelled....

*The two  
Poes.*

the dark and clustering hair, the mouth whose smile was sweet and winning. . . . this man has not only the gift of beauty but the passionate love of beauty. . . . But look at some Daguerreotype taken shortly before his death, and it is like an inauspicious mirror, that shows all too clearly the ravage made by a vexed spirit within and loses the qualities which only a living artist could feel and capture. . . . Here is. . . . the bitterness of scorn. . . . In Bendann's likeness, indubitably faithful, we find. . . . hardened lines in chin and neck. . . . the face tells of battling, of conquering external enemies, of many a defeat when the man was at war with his meaner self."

Posing has become an art and science in these progressive days. Who would grudge woman-kind the artless joy of being "taken" in the guise of a star actress, an empress, or a reigning beauty? None but the wretch who could hint that the step was a mistake, because the pose imposes. Who has the heart to smile at the youth, whose name is legion, because he assumes a noble expression when facing the camera? If he is not Napoleon crossing the Alps he is Washington crossing the Delaware, and not until he contemplates that picture does he realise his full measure of potential greatness. He never forgets it afterwards. The trouble about this kind of portrait is disconcerting oftentimes. One's reading of these impressive pictures may prepare us to meet greatness as greatness should be met—with courtesies and



expectations proportioned to the figure, which may dwindle to dwarf stature at the first spoken word.

So in the search for the verisimilitude of a famous person we are thrown off the scent by Daguerreotypes, glass and paper photographs, in which the well-meaning sun, emblem of divine light and power, gets badly foiled by those shadow imps who symbolize the Prince of Darkness. The veriest gradation between a light and a shade in photography imparts beauty or ugliness to a feature, which often means salvation or damnation to the character. The philanthropic profession of the deft retoucher would no doubt long ere this have been classed and rewarded as is that of the pulpiteer but for our modest reluctance to own our indebtedness to her saving grace. And then, there is no little agony of conscience in deciding on the degree of fidelity in the photos of our friends, whose more exquisite traits seem to come out in studios of strangers and shrink back when we welcome them to our hearts and homes.

Poe, for instance. Two legends circulate about him, the one portrays him as "beautiful" of aspect, the other as the reverse. Even his biographers, and biographers are always infallible, paint his character in the two extremes, something less than a saint, something worse than a sinner; an angel, perhaps; fallen, sure. The pages which follow deal with some major and minor characteristics of one whom I may not speak of as the greatest, or one

*Sun  
portraits.*

among the great, or even as the least of American poets, because New York's "Hall of Fame" has no niche for Poe, and the readers of New York's literary "Critic" would not include him in their list of the Ten Foremost Writers of the United States.

#### NOTES ON THE FACES

The faces here presented are offered as charts rather than pictures, the intent being to get at, if at all possible by rule of thumb guided by this and that light of the eye, the sum of Poe's contradictory characteristics, of face and mind. One can pick out a line here and a twist there from the various Daguerreotypes, and construct a fairly probable index to Poe's make up, but the feature that bothered pure intellect most was—the Button. The great Button problem is not to be ignored in this field of scientific research. Some of these absolutely faithful—because photographic—portraits show us that Poe had this among his peculiarities of genius, his coat buttons were on the left side. This trait indicated, of course, that the gentle Poe inherited the feminine temperament, as women never wear their buttons right. We stand open to correction by the tailor-made lady, whose better judgment in all matters ever commands our homage.

We of the laity talk glibly of photographic negatives though we might be puzzled to define a positive. A Daguerreotype is, used to be, a sil-

*The  
Button  
clue.*

vered metal plate, the mirror of the ancients. The victim looked into this mirror, which "took" him in beautifully. When we look at a Daguerreotype we see him as it saw him, *i. e.*, in reverse. Now, not many of us can stand reverses without losing something, particularly our pleasant expression, which is the photographer's most valuable asset. In analysing these portraits, as reproduced in book plates, it was puzzling to be sure whether Poe parted his hair on the right side or the left. So much in character depends on the turn of a hair. But for fear of inspiring fond mothers with a new and cruel intellectual fad, I might remark in passing that more men of uncommon abilities have their natural parting on the right side than I have noticed among the lefts, in proportion to numbers. On the principle, doubtless, by which black sheep are the distinguished minority of their, and often of our, flock. Poe had the brand of wig that anyone could part anywhere and itself everywhere, as witness these painful efforts to depict the hue, sheen, style and corkscruity of each separate lock. Those were the heydays of romantic poets and corybantic orators, so many of whom safely reckoned on the common herd appreciating the calf-brain according to the display of full-grown Buffalo-billity outside.

Here came the grand solution by the differential button calculus. If in this portrait Poe's hair is parted on his right side, and in that one on his left, he evidently did it for the gratification of his

*The  
turn of  
a hair.*

biographers lacking any stronger proofs of their contention that he was a lineal descendant of the "Imp of the Perverse." But in copies of the same Daguerreotype the hair is parted now on the button side, and again on the side of the buttonholes. For example, take the one now owned by the Players' Club, New York. It is a fine portrait in essentials, and is distinguished by triplet ringlets standing out at right angles from the left side of his head. This is the side of the hair parting. How do we know? Because it is the buttonhole side. The same photo is reproduced, that is, exquisitely engraved on steel as the frontispiece in Prof. Woodberry's "Life of Poe," lavishly fattened and beautified out of character-semblance, but it adorns a book that needs it. In the "India Paper Edition" (see body of the book for fuller notices of these biographies) this Players' portrait is identically copied. In volume XII of Professor Harrison's Virginia Edition, is a feeble wash, wishy-wash, drawing of this portrait, but reversed, and in volume XVI is another reversed copy, with the character details nicely washed out. Another and an important full face Daguerreotype, pretty surely the last one taken, a few months before Poe died, misleads us into swearing that he parted his hair on the right, especially as his right hand, as it seems, is thrust into his vest. Not until we note that the parting is on the buttonhole side, and not on the right, do we awake to the fact that this is one of the negative Daguerreotypes,

showing Poe as in the permanent mirror, and not as to our eye.

So be it, says the patient reader, and what if it is? Much ado about trifles. To which pardonable criticism the answer is—please turn to the Transposable Portrait which forms the frontispiece.

This is an experiment in the obverse and reverse, the positive and negative, in faces. The above mentioned Daguerreotypes show different characteristics, speaking generally, as we view them on the page, and then look at them from the back as we hold the page to the light. To test one's theory of Poe's contradictory temperament and features I made a tracing of the largest face I have seen in a magazine (either the first *Scribner's* or the *Century* some years ago). This tracing has been somewhat accentuated for the present purpose, and forms the uncut page. The cut, or divided page, shows when both halves are united a reversed duplicate of the former. Note the prominent temple, and the contrast between the expressions in positive and negative. Ignore buttons.

*The  
experi-  
ment.*

Now, suppose that the right and left of Poe's head and face had been cast in exactly the same mould, might that have affected his character in some way?

Turn down one of the half-faces and observe the outcome of this experiment in re-forming Poe's make-up. In the swelled-head unity we see the

*The  
levelled  
head.*

top-heavy brain that bred and fed on eerie fancies, strange monstrosities, grotesques and arabesques, of the unbalanced mind that "laughs but smiles no more." This head will reel at the sight of even a pencil drawing of Cork, with the bottle a hundred miles away. Happily all round, including a biographer or two, Poe had no more, at most, than half a head like this, the typical poet-head of the common hydrocephalic species.

Now lift that and lay down the other half-face. Philip is himself again, sober and sane. The square headed *constructor* of stories and poems, architect, builder, and adorer with art. If only Poe had administered one of the drugs his loving "life" writers guess at, being certain only of "coffee and wine" (!), if he had found a way to still the midnight revelry of that wild sleepless bloated half-brain, long enough to let the balanced-half conduct the business and worldly-wise tactics of a struggler's life, Poe could have sanctified his fame in the estimation of well-to-do purveyors of lightning lunch literature, cooked and flavored to order. But the brain of Poe the Critic and Poe the Poet was a lordly house divided against itself. This experiment is worth what it is worth to the curious in such matters and is indifferent to valuations so long as interest provokes to further thought.

And there is interest, indeed, in the testimony of Mrs. Maria Louise Shew, the friend in need in Poe's darkest hours. Herself trained in the

medical profession of her father, this excellent lady recorded the significant fact in her diary that "in his best health he had lesion of one side of the brain. As he could not bear stimulants or tonics, without producing insanity, I did not feel much hope that he could be raised up from brain fever brought on by extreme suffering of mind and body—actual want and hunger and cold having been borne by this heroic husband in order to supply food, medicine and comforts to his dying wife, until exhaustion and lifelessness were so near at every reaction that even sedatives had to be administered with extreme caution."

When we speak of a beautiful or a handsome face, our testimony does not stand unless backed by that essential which it is almost a universal rule to ignore—definition. An old lantern has not a prepossessing appearance, but see it when glorified by its light in the dark. Beauty may be skin deep, which makes it popular, or so deep that skin fanciers fail to find it in the depths, whereupon they dub it "homely." This prostitution of the sweetest descriptive in the language could never have become general if the American people (politicians excepted) had been trained in the common sense practice of defining their terms, or in the true appreciation of all the beauties that ennoble this despised word—homeliness. Poe was called beautiful by men as well as women, and in all sincerity, as they spoke of his moments of exaltation. They saw the ocean sparkling in the summer sun, and

*"Homely"  
faces.*

*Poe  
self-  
portrayed.*

happily escaped the sight of it in the black midnight, writhing in its normal state of sullen, chilling gloom. He was born with the makings of a male stage beauty, long, black wavy hair, pallid complexion, dark, expressive eyes and other coveted features, yet he knew that they failed to bring the crowning charm. Of his tormenting demons one delighted to spoil the lantern oil. With genius enough to keep a score of plain faces aglow, he let his own endure eclipse till it wore sombreness as a perpetual veil.

Let us see his own picture of the Poe he had known.

"It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now —!"

I stop thus abruptly this extract from "The Fall



of the House of Usher." The Wedding Year face is a fanciful attempt to recall the young man of twenty-five under a favoring glint of sunshine.

*The  
Smiling  
face.*

Few profiles indicate the full-face expression. This is why many prefer that pose. Half a loaf, the proverb says, is better than no bread at all; undoubtedly, but in portraiture an honest slice of the loaf is preferable to a pretty bit of corner crust. As the current portraits give no sure and certain outline of Poe's nose, which was a cross between Greek and aquiline, I have ventured a delineation, which differs from that of Zolnay's bust, on Poe's own authority.

*The  
Profile  
study.*

This is more or less a copy of the Daguerreotype (mentioned above) taken within about twelve months of Poe's death. Several replicas seem to be in existence, some printed in reverse, and they are dated by guesswork 1848 and 1849. The one certainty is that they portray the poet in his last and deplorable phase. Here are the deep-etched tracks of sorrow, the uncanny curves contrived by the ugly demon to caricature the once pure lines of grace. The eyes have dissolved partnership, the long lovelocks are changed to snakes that wriggle and writhe like things of evil set on to madden the precious spirit in the casket prisoned. This is the portrait of a high priest of despair.

*The  
Widower  
year  
portrait.*

Five years earlier than the date of this, the "Saturday Museum" gave a biography and a portrait of Poe, famous before he wrote "The Raven." He sent a copy to a friend, "herewith I forward the

*The  
Fates  
as face  
artists.*

*S. M.*, containing a biography and caricature, both of myself. I am ugly enough, God knows, but not *quite* so bad as that."

Later caricaturist biographers sniff the traces of evil drugs, "coffee and wine," as they turn up their superfine noses at these portraits in reverse. Again Poe:

"The errors and frailties which I deplore, it cannot at least be asserted that I have been the coward to deny. Never, even, have I made attempt at *extenuating* a weakness which is (or, by the blessing of God, *was*) a calamity, although those who did not know me intimately had little reason to regard it otherwise than as a crime. For, indeed, had my pride, or that of my family, permitted, there was much—very much—there was everything—to be offered in extenuation. There was an epoch at which it might not have been wrong in me to hint—what by the testimony of Dr. Francis and other medical men I might have demonstrated, that the irregularities so profoundly lamented were the *effect* of a terrible evil rather than its cause." This is from Poe's letter "To the Public" in the Philadelphia "Spirit of the Times," 1846.

Recurring to the portrait in the Players' Club, I quote a bit from a letter written by Gabriel Harrison in 1865 to Mrs. Clemm, the good mother of Virginia Poe and her famous husband. It is given in the Virginia Edition of Poe's works.

"You know how much respect I have for the

memory of Eddie, a memory that takes its grace from his great genius, and as I always believed him to have had a gentler and nobler nature—I have of late felt it a sacred duty to see justice done his likeness. All the pictures that have as yet been published of him, or prefixed to his Poems, are to me perfect failures.

*The  
retoucher.*

I have photographed the Daguerreotype of him which is in my possession, and which in my opinion is excellent, as I remember him, and have been working it up in water colors for the purpose of presenting it to the Long Island Historical Society, therefore I desire it to be the authentic likeness of our great poet."

This refers to the prematurely aged face here presented. The reader will indulge his fancy in picturing the living original, somewhere between Gabriel Harrison's loyally "worked up" water color, and my possibly worked down interpretation of defective prints from an unsatisfactory Daguerreotype.

## II

### THE "LAVANTE" SATIRE

The "Virginia Edition" of the Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, in seventeen volumes, was published in 1903. The editor, and author of the Life of the Poet which fills the first volume, is Professor James A. Harrison, of the University of Virginia, where Poe was a student. Volume VII contains the Poems, worthily edited by Charles W. Kent, Ph. D., also a Professor in the University, who contributes the Preface and Introduction. This goodly work supersedes all existing biographies of Poe, and is, as a whole, an ideal monument to the supreme literary genius of his country. The popular notion that he was a poet and maker of short stories, and no more, is a delusion almost as unjust to his deserts as the various detractions of his envious contemporaries of the quill, and their progeny among his later biographers, critics, copyists, and Pharisaical censors, who find Poe's name a handy peg on which to string their market wares.

There is an Appendix in Volume VII, which gives nine pieces of verse under the heading, "Poems attributed to Poe." Among these is the satirical poem of "LAVANTE" which, in 1887, I discovered by chance in the Astor Library of New

York, and despite its cheap pamphlet get-up, saw enough in it to satisfy me it was written by Poe.

After working every possible clue during two months or more, the result fully confirmed my judgment, and I published the evidence, with a full reprint of the poem, and a cumulative argument which exhausted the available material for and against my position, with absolute fairness. It was published by Benjamin and Bell, in New York, and bore the pseudonym, "Geoffrey Quarles." The press notices, so far as I saw them, were of the usual superficial kind when a book is small and does not bear a known name. Most of them dismissed it with the non-committal criticism that it did not look like Poe, that is to say, the Poe they knew, him of the "Raven" and "Bells."

Professors Harrison and Kent have felt an obligation to honor "Lavante" with their recognition, for which, as a life-long friend and vindicator of Poe (out of the flesh) I am duly grateful.

Curiously, in view of what crops up in the following pages, their notice of "Lavante" takes the form of this extract from, apparently, a review of Mr. Griswold's book, introduced as follows:

"*Note*, from 'Passages from the Correspondence of R. (Rufus) W. Griswold,' by W. M. Griswold, Cambridge, 1898, p. 88.

"The metrical satire referred to had the same title as (Rufus) Griswold's book, *The Poets and Poetry of America*. The poem, which is signed LAVANTE, is written in heroic couplets and com-

*Resurrec-  
tion of  
Lavante.*

*The  
New  
York  
"Evening  
Post."*

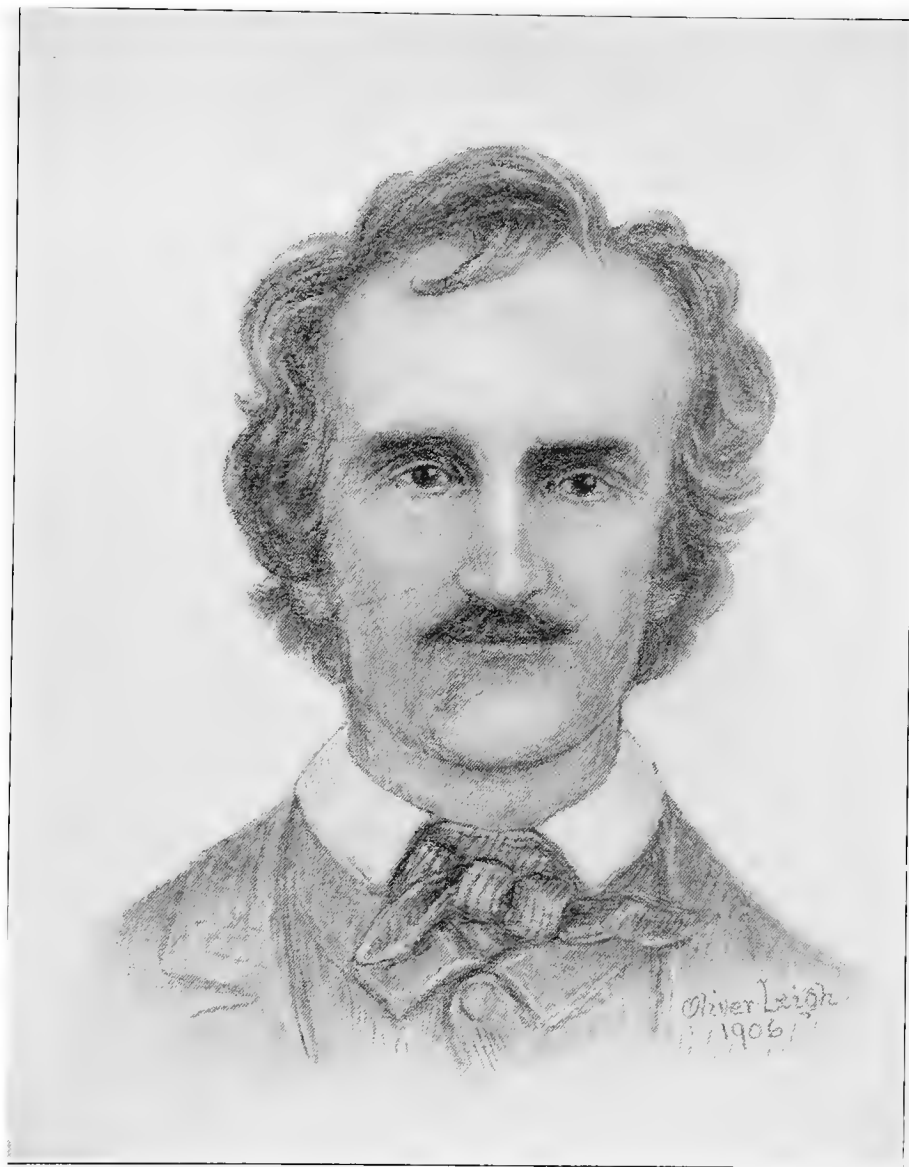
prises about 950 lines. The fact of Poe's authorship was pretty clearly shown a few years ago by an enterprising gentleman, hiding himself behind the *nom de plume* of Geoffrey Quarles, who unearthed the original Philadelphia edition in some out of the way place and carefully edited a reprint." This extract is credited by Mr. W. M. Griswold to the New York *Evening Post* of July 8, 1893.

If a London publication of the exalted literary status of the New York *Evening Post* were to speak of a similar "find" in the Reading Room of the British Museum or the Guildhall Library as having been "unearthed in some out of the way place" (the Astor Library), the literary tribe of that metropolis would feel it awkward that a striking poem, by a striker poet on his stricken contemporaries, could so long have escaped their patriotic familiarity with their poets and greatest libraries.

*Choosing  
a Sample.*

The only recognition from Professors Harrison and Kent personally is this sentence: "The editor (of Vol. VII, endorsed by the editor of the seventeen volumes) has copied one hundred lines of the 'Lavante' satire from the Philadelphia edition of 1847, and herewith presents them to the reader for his judgment as to whether they are Poe's or not."

Then follow one hundred lines of the satire, being the first and introductory lines, bearing the same relation to the satire proper as the average preface to the contents of a book. The learned



THE WEDDING YEAR PORTRAIT, page 15.

*This maiden she lived with no other thought than to love and be  
loved by me.*

—*"Annabel Lee."*





editors did not leave room in the seventeen volumes for a hundred, nor a score, nor even ten of the satire lines that paint the literary portraits of thirty American poets as "Lavante" saw them. If among these thirty the famous but inconvenient Poe had been portrayed, it is just conceivable that a ten-line space might have been spared to enable the Virginia Edition to illustrate the "Lavante" gallery as fairly as it does its doorway.

The discriminating editors dissent from my conclusion that "Lavante" and Poe are identical, but they do not attempt to discuss, nor even cuss, openly, my cumulative argument. They do not notice my pile of evidence, which fills, with the argument, over forty pages of the book of 110 pages in which I reprinted the satire.

They deem it judicious, if not judicial, to constitute the average "reader" the court competent to try a case requiring special knowledge, and the careful weighing of intricate details withheld from this court. They present, with an engaging air of impartiality, as a sufficient exhibit in the case, the portico of a house as yet unbuilt, from which the court is to judge the architecture and strength of the invisible edifice. Then, to enlighten this myopic tribunal and encourage its expected adverse decision, the editors have appended this helpful hint to their one-tenth per cent sample of the satire;

"Dr. Kent does not believe that these lines are by Poe."

*Assisting  
the  
judgment.*

When the court gets one eye clear it perceives that this admirably ambiguous dictum is consistent with silent belief that the satire portraits in the remaining 850 lines are verily by Poe, or cannot be denied him.

Actuated by more primitive notions of justice than are allowed to linger in some advanced coteries of certain progressive centres of scholarship, appeal is now taken to the higher court of impartial investigation by experts, and those willing to become so by simply sifting the evidence here given for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

#### SUMMARY OF FACTS AND PROBABILITIES.

Only the briefest epitome of these is possible here, but this and other matters of interest concerning Poe, not adequately studied by his biographers, will be treated in a work by the present writer, which will include some efforts at the true portrayal of a select company of poets born under his luckless star.

The satire opens fire on Rufus Griswold, the dispenser of laurels to his bookful of one hundred and fifty immortals, in which Poe only got a place by ungracious compulsion. Of this number Poe's drastic criticisms killed and scattered all but about ten. "What a cartoon he drew," says Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, "of the writers of his time—the corrective of Griswold's optimistic delineations!"

*Griswold's  
Immor-  
tals.*

In 1847, the wretchedest year he ever experienced, his output was unusually small. In 1843 and 1845 he had lectured in Baltimore and New York on "The Poets and Poetry of America." The *American Review*, February, 1845, reports that in this lecture Poe "made unmitigated war upon the prevalent Puffery, and dragged several popular idols from their pedestals."

The *Home Journal* of March 20, 1847, announced that there would shortly be published "The Authors of America, in Prose and Verse; by Edgar Allan Poe." Mr. Woodberry, in his "American Men of Letters" biography, published before my "*Lavante*" brochure, says this never appeared. Note the curious phrasing in the above title. Is there a Poesque cryptic suggestion that he, Poe, might write of the "American Authors" in *his own* Prose and Verse?

This 1847 "Lavante" satire was anonymous, and so was the only typical Poe-poem published in that year—"Ulalume." In December, 1846, Poe says, "I am now at this—body and soul." At what? Preparing to publish "Some honest Opinions about (the Literati), Autorial Merits and Demerits, with occasional words of Personality," etc. Ingram, the English biographer who errs on the side of partiality for Poe, confesses an uncomfortable doubt as to the possibility of the MS. of this work in prose and verse having been "lost" by Rufus Griswold, to whose keeping as literary executor Poe's papers were entrusted. This is

Poe's  
"lost"  
work.

*The  
"lost"  
work  
found.*

unkind. All we really know is that Griswold had a fine talent as a literary executioner during Poe's lifetime, and that it quite unnecessarily gave vim to his notorious obituary anathematization of the poor corpse in the New York *Tribune* on the day after the poet's death.

Among the press notices of my argument on "Lavante" were a couple of suggestions that the satire was probably the work either of Lambert A. Wilmer, whose "Quacks of Helicon" was killed by Poe's review of it, or of Laughton Osborn, whose "Vision of Rubeta" Poe rescued from oblivion, its title only, by his more friendly critique. I dismiss this matter with the remark that there has not yet been a serious attempt to disprove my contention.

As to the euphonious pseudonym, "Lavante," Poe was, and remains, the supreme euphonist. One of his characters in "Politian" is "Lalage." In other of his pages we find "Levante" and "Lalande," and a hundred verbal symphonies.

I might elaborate these materials to fill every page in this book, but will stop here. I submit that anyone anxious to disprove the Poe authorship of this satire (which is none the less poetical despite his warning that "a satire is, of course, no poem"), must produce on the witness stand a man who, with Poe's motives, Poe's intellect, Poe's strength and weakness, Poe's literary judgments, prejudices, contempt for mediocrities, and love of mystery, was yet not Poe himself.

# THE POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA

## A SATIRE

Clime of the brave! entire from sea to sea!  
Vain is thy boast that thou art blest and free!  
Oh, servile slave to eastern rules and rhyme,  
Almost from Milton's blank to Chaucer's chime!  
Thy own proud bards behold! a motley band  
To lead the music of their native land.

Immortal GRISWOLD! thine the deathless name  
Shall bear the palm of more than mortal fame!  
For thine the lofty boast at once to save  
The humble bard perchance from hapless grave,  
Weave with his crown thy fadeless laurel bays,  
And with thy nursling gain undying praise.

[Poe did not conceal his contempt for this self-appointed *accoucheur* of his country's poetical genius, even in his review of Griswold's volume, "The Poets and Poetry of America," in *Graham's Magazine*, June, 1842. Admitting its interest as a collection of national verse, he protested against the exclusion of several writers of distinction, while "there are many mere versifiers included." The Boston coterie were unduly favored, except that Lowell had been inadequately represented. In his

*Poetry  
in the  
forties.*

review of Griswold's third edition, 1843, Poe experiments in prose satire akin to vituperation.

"Is Mr.—we ask his pardon—the Reverend Mr. Griswold (so puffed, praised, and glorified in advance), the man of varied talents, of genius, of overweening intellect, he was somewhere pictured, or is he the arrant literary quack he is now entitled by the American press?....That he has some talents we allow, but they are only those of a mediocre character; indeed, every third man one might meet in a day's walk is his equal, if not his superior. As a critic his judgment is worthless. ....His self-esteem is strangely developed. Here we have him in his capacity of 'author' of the 'Poets and Poetry of America,' as thirteenth in the list, and of course superior to Lowell, Poe (seven others named), who follow him. Un-exampl'd modesty!"]

Awake, satiric muse! awake in might  
To strike, for Poesy's insulted right!

The chase is up, arise and onward press,  
If mean the game yet not the sport is less!  
In modern times, who may not hope for praise  
When all we ask is but unmeaning lays?  
And thoughtless bards can suit the servile throng  
With heartless verse and worse than worthless song.

[Not Byronic themes, nor Pope's philosophy or wholesome satire, not even Campbell songs of joyous Hope,]

Alike when life is sad or wrapt in ease;  
Not these the subjects which our times demand  
To please the public and to curse the land!

[Shadowy word pictures of filmy fancies, pretty washy drawings of hackneyed scenes or scenery, or sickly dream stuff done up in verse or worse;]

No more we ask; no more the bard can give—  
In times like these can mind or merit live?

[Poet Poe was not a prophet. He did not foresee a day when Poesy would flourish as a mechanic art-craft, when "mind" would be content with the quarry slave's work and wage, and "merit" chisel the blocks into cunning *fake similes* of the more or less antique.]

and  
"in times  
like  
these."

Too proud to stoop, or heed the critic's rage,  
Such is my crime before this righteous age;  
I printed but to suit the present whim  
Without a preface, or a suppliant hymn.

[He holds no man a genius who dare not risk his work, if satisfactory to himself in point of art, defiant of Mrs. Grundy's goody criticism. "The fact is," says Poe in a notice of Bayard Taylor, "someone should show how and why it is that the ubiquitous quack in letters can always 'succeed,' while genius—which implies self-respect, with a scorn of creeping and crawling—must inevitably succumb." This cruel suggestion was all right for those deplorable days, but would he now seriously propose to resurrect another pen-sceptred Herod to massacre the Innocents of the chosen tribe?]

The poet's heart, the poet's sense sublime  
Was born for torture and his soul for rhyme.  
Intense his feeling and severe his pain,  
That sullen frown no more from love would gain;

*The  
tortured  
heart.*

So nice his texture, and so fine the mould  
None e'er can guess what ne'er to sight is told,  
Nor search the secrets of a soul like his,  
Or from the common mind imagine this,  
The hope, the fear, the rapture and delight  
Are all his own—and impulse all his light.  
Earth, air, and sea, the planet and the sun  
Are but the elements of art begun;  
The inner world, the sphere of thought and mind,  
The mysteries that make and move mankind  
To him are servile, and for him were made,  
Yea, but for him, would still from beauty fade.  
Thus noble wit, as by a skill divine  
Ennobles nature and prevents decline;  
Thus beauty sways and anguish rends the heart,  
By passion wrought into the height of art.

[The first ten lines of this passage strikingly recall Poe's essay on "The Poetic Principle," which he delivered as a lecture, and which appeared in "Sartain's Magazine" shortly after his death. If their beauty is impaired by the necessity of expression in heroic couplets, Poe anticipates the criticism and draws its sting by his significant dictum, "*A satire is, of course, no poem.*" This utterance has been carefully ignored by biographers and reviewers who have lightly written themselves down as disbelievers in the possibility of Poe having put his lecture, bearing the same title as this satire, into rhymed couplets that do not, "of course," pretend to pose as a Poe poem. Nevertheless, within their limitations these ten lines hold a core of poetry worthy even of him, and certainly none among his half-hearted "friends," rhymers or prosers, in their grudging him the credit of this thorny crown for poetasters,



has produced an equally eloquent verse vignette of the genuine article.

Now read again the next ten lines, beginning "Earth, air, and sea." Here the Poet claims the universe as his sphere, with right to soar to the firmament, and from its pure ether view the topmost peaks of the knowable and at will probe the dark profundities of philosophy. Does this, too, strike the august dispensers of Poe-destiny as hopelessly unlike the author of "The Bells," whom they are graciously willing to patronize if he remains screwed up in the nice little casket they have wrought for him?

Is it forgotten that Poe actually composed and published a philosophical rhapsody? With this extraordinary composition he thought to place the capstone on the edifice of his life-work. If a rhymed satire is no poem, how much less so must be a prose disquisition on the laws of cosmology. Yet this is the title, "EUREKA: A *Prose Poem*; by Edgar A. Poe." It was a book of some two hundred pages, published the year before his death. Three sentences from its first page must suffice as index to the range of this astounding treatise:

"What terms shall I find sufficiently simple in their sublimity—sufficiently sublime in their simplicity—for the mere enunciation of my theme? I design to speak of the *Physical, Metaphysical, and Mathematical*—of the *Material and Spiritual Universe*:—of its *Essence, its Origin, its Crea-*

Poe  
as  
Philoso-  
pher.

*In this  
prose  
outsoar-  
ing all  
poets  
of the  
time.*

*tion, its Present Condition and its Destiny.* I shall be so rash, moreover, as to challenge the conclusions, and thus, in effect, to question the sagacity, of many of the greatest and most justly revered of men."

In the full maturity of his powers—not merely as a maker of verse and stories but as a (probably too) profound and intense thinker—Poe dedicated this Prose Poem to Humboldt. Pitifullest of fates—fastidious artist-poet curst with the madness for wrenching the secrets of God from the ever unknowable! Conceive if you can the agonized expression of triumph-despair as he dashed down these following words in his short Preface, in the dread instant of halting between letting it live or perish in the flames as a forlorn hope.

"*What I here propound is true*:—therefore it cannot die:—or if by any means it be now trodden down so that it die, it will 'rise again to the Life Everlasting.' Nevertheless it is as a Poem only that I wish this work to be judged after I am dead."]

*Griswold  
as a  
"blown  
god."*

. . . . .  
The night was up, when all serene and glad  
Each tuneful bard was for the banquet clad,  
While GRISWOLD's self, like Jeffrey on his throne  
Was raised sublime and to a god was blown.

[The trembling bards cringe before him, struggling to offer their vows and incense on the altar of Fame over which the "blown" god presides. Francis Jeffrey was the "hanging judge" of the

*Edinburgh Review*, who gleefully sentenced Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge and their school to death—which proved the gate to immortality. Poe's criticisms killed only Griswold pets, and the "blown god" himself failed to balloon them to Valhalla.]

First comes great WILLIS, trembling to his heels,  
 Invokes the god, and for his country feels.  
 But few indeed could boast such matchless head,  
 So well proportioned and so rich in lead;  
 Each fearful bump phrenologists would say  
 Was thunderproof till thunder's self decay;  
 So thick the skull where few ideas meet,  
 For dulness and decay a calm retreat.

[Nathaniel Parker Willis was the most popular writer of verse and chatty prose. He made his way into fashionable literary salons in London, where his dandyism, agreeable ways, and American celebrity won him the favor of lords and ladies, whose manners and homes he pictured for his countrymen. Lavante honors Willis with a second tribute.]

All hail! great searcher of the human heart,  
 As great in prose as in poetic art,  
 Immortal WILLIS, hail! in whom combine  
 The base and great with wit to make thee shine.  
 An exile from thy native land and home,  
 Well pleased in other lands to rhyme and roam,  
 Lest villain hands should strive to make thee just  
 To hungry creditors, ill-fed on trust;  
 As light in heart as fickle in thy mind,  
 Canst thou describe the motives of mankind?  
 Hast thou acquired the rarer skill to sing  
 The flood of feeling from its fountain spring?  
 As well might Etna's fiery summit bloom,  
 Or light surround the cypress-shaded tomb,

*Nathan-  
 iel  
 Parker  
 Willis.*

As thou relate in numbers fresh and true  
 Whence actions spring, or life its essence drew.  
 Yet thou canst write, from eastern shore, the change  
 Of faithless custom, ever wild and strange,  
 Or rhyme from thence some tale of hopeless love  
 To please fair Venus or her silly dove;  
 Address the Spring, or April, in a lay  
 With Wordsworth for thy tune in mellow May,  
 Enough—to gain the Western critic's praise  
 And crown thy brow with fadeless laurel bays,  
 Enough to gain, where more should own the name,  
 A poet's prize, a poet's envied fame!  
 Such is the toil, and such the slightest care  
 To swell to-day this bubble of the air.

[Compare Poe's note on Willis in *The Literati*.  
 "Mr. Willis is yet young. . . . Without being handsome his face is somewhat too full, or rather heavy in its lower portions. Neither his nose nor forehead can be defended; the latter would puzzle phrenology. . . . As a poet Mr. Willis is not entitled to so high a rank as he may justly claim for his prose. His style proper may be called extravagant, *bizarre*, pointed." "However highly we respect Mr. Willis's talents we have nothing but contempt for his affectations."—*Broadway Journal*, 1845.]

William  
 Cullen  
 Bryant.

In meads of green and woodland shades at rest  
 Next view the lofty BRYANT greatly blest,  
 Who with his brother-bards alone can sing  
 That streamlets gild and flowers deck the spring,  
 Nor little thinks how slight the profit hence  
 When beauty charms, not aids our common sense.

When sunset softly gilds the western sky  
 And all but paints enchantment to the eye,  
 Nor wakes a sense, but wakes to love the hue  
 From farewell beam on skies of azure blue;  
 Can scene like this, the fairest of our earth

Awake the thoughts of more than mortal birth,  
Or rouse the nobler feelings of the soul?  
Or is delight the poet's noblest goal?  
Has not the heart its passions, as the brain  
The power to light the fancy in its train?  
Yes! there are springs of thought and feeling chaste  
No vulgar eye hath to their fountain traced;  
Nor knows the bard but half his proper art  
Who aims to please the eye, not rend the heart.

[William Cullen Bryant was but a stripling in his teens when he began writing "Thanatopsis," which was published before he attained his majority. Stedman observes that "no one else of like years ever composed a single poem that had so continuous and elevating an effect upon the literature of a country." It set the heavy pace for aspirants until Longfellow ambled more cheerily and, with "The Waterfowl," this poem marks the summit of Bryant's poetical genius.

Though fifty-three years old when this satire was printed it hails him as "the younger Bryant" and notes "young Bryant's scowl." In "The Literati" Poe wrote, "it will never do to claim for Bryant a genius of the loftiest order, but there has been latterly, since the days of Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Lowell, a growing disposition to deny him genius in any respect. . . . 'Thanatopsis' is the poem by which he is best known but it is by no means his best poem. The concluding thought is exceedingly noble, and has done wonders for the success of the whole composition."

Again, in "The Poetic Principle," he says, "he who shall simply sing, with however glowing

enthusiasm or vivid truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odors, and colors, and sentiments, which greet *him* in common with all mankind—he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title.” Happily for the undivine, trade in commonplace potrey-padding still flourishes galore.]

*Oliver  
Wendell  
Holmes.*

Next comes our noble Doctor, HOLMES we call,  
Still bent to jest in spite of wit and gall,  
Still prone to rhyme with or without a soul,  
Style, ornament, and rhyme the poet's whole.  
Those tin-pan joys which catch the listless ear  
Awhile delight, then worse than vile appear.

Such is thy boast, proud Holmes, to touch the heart,  
If not by genius, by thy native art!  
For grant thy lofty strain but once begun,  
How rich and how exhaustless is thy fun!  
As true thy song, no doubt, as holy writ,  
One merit more—it has some idle wit.

[Some badinage of “idle wit” follows, pointed by the Doctor's earthly profession.]

So light thy verse, a plaything of the air,  
Must mortal live on unsubstantial fare  
Or he who takes it for an ague chill,  
Must own at least it was a pleasant pill.

[Griswold decreed that “as a versifier Holmes is equal to Tennyson, and with the same patient effort would every way surpass him.” On which Poe advises Holmes “to beg Mr. Griswold not to puff him, or he may depend upon his poems being incontinently damned.” The author of “The Raven” was scarcely by right divine entitled to sit upon the author of “The One Hoss Shay,”

nor to enjoy the carollings of any born i' the vein of jollity. Poe's humor was an arrow barbed at both ends, worse luck. Oliver Wendell Holmes physicked more thousands out of their doleful dumps with his inkpot than he cured scores with pills and potions. Where Poe gave, and still gives, weaklings the creeps at midnight, Holmes sends sweet slumbers without the aid of soporifics. The present writer recalls his early experiences under these two treatments, and must hold for once with the doctor as against the minister of dis-ease to minds unripe. Many years later this old esteem took on a flush of vainglory on receiving a note from the Tom Hood of America saying that a certain bit of homemade wit-jingle "has given me as much pleasure as if Tom Hood had written it," over the sea.]

Shall HALLECK not one passing moment claim?  
Blest bard! immortal in Bozarris' name!

*Fitz-  
Greene  
Halleck.*

[No didactic theme inspired this singer, as it might have swamped him in the blues.]

But those who bled and fell in freedom's cause  
Thy worthier theme—attest it our applause!  
Nay, though the hero bravely fought and fell,  
Though thine own music fall like magic spell,  
Grant that thy palm and praise is fairly won,  
Is all achieved that mortal might have done?

Scorn the vile throng as if in vengeance set  
To write for each vile monthly and gazette;  
Extend thy sphere, thy native powers expand,  
And as confessed immortal poet stand.

[Fitz-Greene Halleck was gifted with powers that should have ranked him with the highest school of poets, but he was an easy-going cynic, and his backbone gave out when he was made factotum for old John Jacob Astor.

"Of late days," wrote Poe in *Graham's Magazine*, 1843, "Halleck has nearly abandoned the Muses, much to the regret of his friends and to the neglect of his reputation. He is now in the maturity of his powers (in his fifty-fourth year), and might redeem America from an imputation to which she has been too frequently subjected—the imputation of inability to produce a *great* poem."]

*Albert  
Pike.*

Who that sings the gods, albeit unlike,  
More seems their proper son than ALBERT PIKE?

Oh, Albert Pike! stick to thy godlike lay,  
Thy gods and goddesses in long array!  
No matter if in wit and judgment weak,  
Thy faults confess, their grace and pardon seek.

As some soft stream which glides unheard along,  
So glide thy music, so expire thy song;  
So melt thy melody into the soul,  
That not thy foe may say—it all was stole!

[Mixed with this raillery there is sincere respect for Pike's "Hymns to the Gods" and other work. The refrain to "The Raven" was charged as a plagiarism or imitation of Pike's "Isadore," which may account for the acidity in the passage partly quoted above. In the prose of his "Autography" Poe writes without bias. "Pike has merit, and



that of a high order. He is the most classic of our poets in the best sense of the term. Upon the whole, there are few of our native writers to whom we consider him inferior.”]

Hail, soft Humanity! whose genial ray  
Delights the soul along thy simple lay!  
Friend of the slave! whose rough and rugged verse  
Might burst his chains, his hopeless fate reverse.

*John  
Greenleaf  
Whittier.*

[To whom could lines like these and the following apply but to John Greenleaf Whittier, the Abolitionist laureate? The satire appears to have been composed piecemeal and carelessly put together for printing. The four lines above, and six more, come on page 17, and fourteen more on page 18, which we do not quote, and then, on page 21, we find thirty-two more, in which Whittier's name first appears.]

Vain is thy claim to blest Apollo's sacred lyre, (!)  
Since not his beams thy lifeless note inspire.

No matter this—let blame be light to thee,  
Thine be the boast of soft humanity.

I surely mean not, WHITTIER, an offence.

[Well for thee in sticking to homely themes, as a touch of the romantic might burst thy genius.]

No, Whittier, no—! thou must not stray  
Where hap like this might snatch thy wits away,  
Nor seek the south, where spring for ever reigns  
To deck the sunny mount and sloping plains,  
Lest too much heat should melt thy feeble brain,  
And turn thy watery muse to mist again.

*Poe's  
dislike  
of  
didactic  
verse.*

No—Whittier—no! far better than to roam,  
To cherish pride in love of sacred home,  
And worship Nature in her solitude  
Beneath thy native sky and mountains rude;  
Thus safe to sing thy tale of childhood o'er,  
Till infants shout and humbly ask for more.

[Poe was a southerner, mis-delivered in Boston. He had neither political, personal, nor poetical sympathy with northerners.

“Man is only incidentally a poetic theme:—we mean the heart and intellect of Man; matters which the pseudo-transcendentalists of Frog-pondium (Boston) are perpetually attempting to force into poetry.”—*Broadway Journal*, 1845. In the “Autography” he writes, “Whittier is placed by his particular admirers in the very front rank of American poets. We are not disposed to agree with their decision in every respect. He is a fine versifier. . . . has a certain *vivida vis* of expression which seems to be his forte, but in taste, and especially in imagination. . . . he is ever remarkably deficient. His themes are never to our liking.”

Some of us roamers through and around the wilderness of printed poetry have made ascents of cloud-capped hills, explored the gorgeous and the wild, the Persian gardens and the dark borderlands where Will o' the Wisps beguile into foul bogs, and we come back vowing never again to mistake grandeur for true delight in scenery, poetry, or home. Vistas of rolling farm and garden land, studded with village belfry towers, embowered cottage groups, and stately manor

gables, as in mellowed England, no prisoning hill walls to rob our horizon view and no monotony of prairie flat nor overpowering bullies of forest or torrent to vaunt their bigness over our puny but free-soaring selves—this is the scenery we can live with in perfect and unwavering happiness. Of all our American poets commend me to Whittier's sweet spirited strain, his uniquely modest pose, and when we ponder his broad-based patriotism, fiery when fire was the need yet characteristically serene, with sunset glow of peace, it is tempting to whisper that his heart and song would have been cheaply gained for his country's good, at any time these forty years, by swapping for his inspiration nine-tenths of the magazine shoal of pareasitical laureatettes.]

Shall LOWELL still by dreams inflate his pride  
And ramble most where most the mists reside?

[This solitary allusion to James Russell Lowell is like the remnant of a cancelled passage. Poe had various attitudes towards Lowell, according to circumstances, as will be seen. In 1842, as has already been noted, and again in 1844, in *Graham's Magazine* for March, he writes graciously, "This new volume of poems by Mr. Lowell will place him. . . *at the very head* of the poets of America." In *Godey's Lady's Book*, August, 1845, he gives Lowell instruction in literary precision, calls his "Conversations on the Poets" a

James  
Russell  
Lowell.

farce and dubs the author "the Anacharsis Clootz of American letters."

In 1848 Lowell published his "Fable for Critics," in which he paid his famous compliment to Poe.

Here comes Poe with his Raven, like Barnaby Rudge,  
Three-fifths of him genius, and two-fifths sheer fudge;  
Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,  
In a way to make all men of common sense d— metres;  
Who has written some things far the best of their kind,  
But somehow the heart seems squeezed out by the mind.

Poe,  
"three-  
fifths of  
him  
genius."

The "Fable" was reviewed by Poe in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, March, 1849, at great length, and he quotes the lines above, referring to himself in the third person. The thing is "loose, ill-conceived and feebly executed. Some good hints and sparkling witticisms do not compensate for its rambling plot—if plot it can be called, and for the want of artistic finish, especially in its versification.... Mr. Lowell is one of the most rabid of the Abolition fanatics, and no Southerner who does not wish to be insulted should ever touch a volume by this author.... He has not the common honesty to speak well, even in a literary sense, of any man who is not a ranting abolitionist. With the exception of Mr. Poe (who has written some commendatory criticisms on his poems) no Southerner is mentioned at all in the 'Fable.'" Then follows the quotation.

[Mr. Lowell professed entire ignorance of the

Lavante satire when it was brought to his notice by the present writer.]

Arise, ye bards! assume the nobler lay!  
 Let common sense and genius lead the way,  
 New worlds create of deathless thought and mind,  
 And prove yourselves an honor to mankind;  
 Ne'er let the muse those meaner themes regard,  
 Or not complain the poet's fate is hard!  
 Let Cambridge rouse her proud adopted son  
 The bard to dare, nor themes sublime to shun.

[This short allusion to Longfellow avoids the furious controversy which a few years back had raged over Poe's accusations of plagiarism and imitation by the Cambridge Professor. Reviewing the "Ballads and Poems" in 1842, Poe had expressed admiration for Longfellow's "genius" while deprecating "his many errors of affectation and imitation.... His artistical skill is great and his ideality high, but his conception of the aims of poesy *is all wrong*, and this we shall prove at some future day. His didactics are all out of place." Three years later, being in an unwontedly genial mood after lecturing in Boston, he indulged in this sweet little reverie in the *Broadway Journal*.

"We like Boston. We were born there—and perhaps it is just as well not to mention that we are heartily ashamed of the fact. The Bostonians are very well in their way. Their hotels are bad. Their pumpkin pies are delicious. Their poetry is not so good. Their Common is no common thing—and the duck pond might answer—if its answer could be heard for the frogs.

Henry  
 Wadsworth  
 Longfellow.

"But with all these good qualities the Bostonians have no soul. They have always evinced towards us individually the basest ingratitude for the services we rendered them in enlightening them about the originality of Mr. Longfellow."

Poe had charged him with imitations of Tennyson, Motherwell, Bryant, and the writer of "Politian."

And now, in conclusion, a few couplets from "Lavante's" scornful farewell to the minstrels:

*"I too can rhyme."*

With you, ye minor bards, I hold not war;  
Much as yourselves would I that strife abhor,  
Too dull your muse offence to give or take,  
My hate to rouse, or at my thrust awake;  
So cold your strain, so dead your accents fall  
Great thanks to GRISWOLD that ye live at all.

I too can rhyme, and in my time have sung  
When hope was high, and infant muse was young,  
Too proud in sense, too much of manly tone,  
I gave but challenge to be heard and known,  
No crouching prayer to gain the critic round,  
No favor sought, nor common mercy found.  
Yet thanks to Western fools, in haste to kill  
They could not gall me with satiric quill!

Once I could bear all which the best can bear,  
Could scorn at pain, and hate at times the fair,  
But now, by slight experience taught to strike,  
I but repel where others make dislike.

Too well my gentle spirit some may know:  
Cry up the chase—I can repay a blow;  
Once I could bend, or feign to bend, the knee,  
When conscience told 'twas order's just decree,  
I could dissemble scorn, and strive to seem  
As calm as love embracing in a dream;  
No charge could drag resentment from its rest,  
My brow was smooth, my heart was well possess,

What now is done not prudence would recall,  
 If pain ensue, what sooner might befall?  
 Should public hate upon my pen react,  
 No matter this—I will not aught retract.

LAVANTE.

[Out of the abundance of prose parallels to this defiance quotable from Poe's later writings only this one is selected.

"In the (my) late lecture on "The Poets and Poetry of America" (at Boston) I took occasion to speak what I know to be the truth and to speak it that there should be no chance of misunderstanding in what I intended to say. I told these (editors and their connections) to their teeth that, with a *very* few noble exceptions, they had been engaged for many years in a system of indiscriminate laudation of American books—a system which had tended, more than any other one thing in the world, to the depression of that American Literature whose elevation it was desired to effect. Could I, at the moment, have invented any terms more explicit, wherewith to express my contempt of our general editorial course of corruption and puffery, I should have employed them, *and should I think of anything more expressive hereafter, I will endeavor to find or make an opportunity for its introduction to the public.* (The italics are ours.)

Poe's  
 threat of  
 a scathing  
 satire.

"And what, for all this had I to anticipate? In a very few cases the open or silent approval of the more chivalrous portion of the press, but in a majority of instances I should have been weak

indeed to look for anything but abuse." *Broadway Journal*, 1845.

POE'S CRYPTOGRAMS.

*The curious final couplet.*

Remembering his love of mystery and genius for cryptographic writing it appeared possible that if Poe had versified his lecture, he might have hidden the authorship in the last couplet:

SHOULD PUBLIC HATE UPON MY PEN REACT,  
NO MATTER THIS—I WILL NOT AUGHT RETRACT.

I find the four following sentences are contained in this couplet:

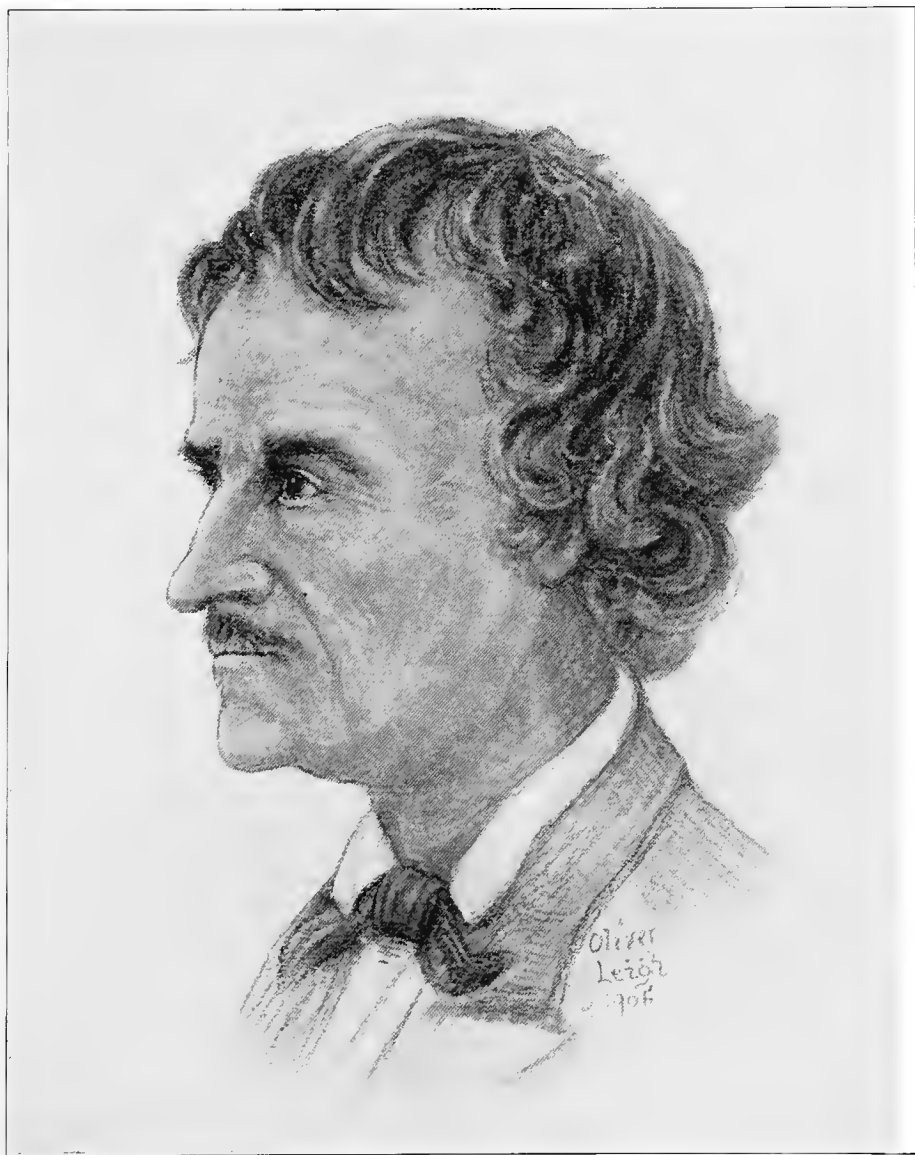
EDGAR ALLAN POE;

AMERICAN POETS AND POETRY, A SATIRE.  
A SATIRE, EVERY WORD TRUE; EDGAR ALLAN POE,  
A TRUE AND HONEST SATIRE, BY EDGAR ALLAN POE.

Take this for what it is worth. Curiously enough, the titles of the two satires reviewed by Poe, "The Quacks of Helicon" and "The Vision of Rubeta," cannot be got out of this couplet. Neither can the names of those poets in the satire who just possibly might be suspected of its authorship, Griswold, Lowell, Holmes, Pike, Benjamin, Longfellow, Dawes, Pinkney, Willis, Whittier, Clarke, Halleck, Tucker, Hoffman, Parker.

Lastly, the very first man to be satirized by any brother poet, and the last one to be omitted from a general round-up, would have been Edgar Allan Poe. The absence of his name it was that started me on this quest.





PROFILE STUDY, page 15.

*Deep into the darkness peering, long I stood there, wondering, fearing,  
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before.*

—"The Raven."



### III

## HIS BIOGRAPHERS, CENSORS AND CHAMPIONS

Harrison's *Virginia edition of the Complete Works of Poe*, 17 vols. 1903.

As elsewhere stated, this is a welcome work, as complete and well edited—with the exceptions noted—as is probably possible or needed. It begins to do justice to this master workman in his exclusive field of poetry; as the pioneer of and model for pure criticism in this country; as the first and last of its true-born short story constructors, and the greatest of its literary martyrs.

And yet the taint of musty prejudice hangs over many a page.

Under the newer code sanctified by the examples of Froude among biographers, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe and later feminine undrapers of Byron, and by the approved usage of majority journalism, I suppose it is excellent taste to reprint the atrocious blackguardisms of Dr. "Ben Bolt" English, digging them up from the grave in which the New York law court thought it was burying them forever when it condemned that slanderer to make a goodly reparation to his victim. This quite unnecessary resurrection of laid ghouls is

*Garbage  
rakers.*

balanced by the long extract from Nathaniel P. Willis's noble defence of Poe against Griswold's despicable obituary assault the day after the poet's death.

*Alas,  
alas!*

One must not doubt that patriotic charity for the sins of a sinless people's sole great literary man makes it incumbent on his biographers to blazon every echo of magnified scandal, every backbite of ignorant gabble and snarl of envy, in their books, which are the outcome of disinterested longings to show how maddeningly cruel those infamous slanders were to a too sensitive nature. There can, I suppose, be no objection on the plea of kindness, or fairness, to spice one's business venture in biography with superabundant reminders that its hero resorted to the biblical recipe\* to allay "the extreme anguish and straitened circumstances," which caused "his descent into the moral and physical Maelstrom," a catastrophe which—far from kindling scriptural sympathy—"made him indeed only a shining mark for malice and malignity." Pious storytellers about great men, greatly weakened by great tribulations, find it easy to square their gossip-lust with their conscience by tagging on each lapse into uncharity some sweet thing in humanitarian commiseration.

"Alas, how full of Verlaines, de Mussets and

---

\*"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."

*Prov. xxxi.*

Baudelaires the world has been—men like Poe, *endowed with preternaturally sensitive nerves* (our italics), unable to grapple with the coarse flesh and blood around them, pierced on all sides by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, and succumbing at last to the superincumbent mass of misery.” This is a very beautiful Shakespearean passage, but it is pretty poor Virginian logic for literary college professors to pile stale shame on the memory of a dead university brother because his “endowment” brought him its inevitable usury of agony until welcome death. Endowments come from outside ourselves. Who gave Poe this dower?

*“Endowed  
with”  
slings and  
arrows.*

What! Baudelaire, de Musset, Verlaine, “men like Poe”! Pen wielders of Poe’s school if you please as versemongers, but to class Poe, the deep-eyed Critic, the clean-souled Reasoner in master-prose, the exemplar of pure work, pure style and sane writing as poet, analyst, instructor, corrector of false scales, entertainer, and journalist, with these and other useless drivellers of the sickening Decadent school, is to suggest a slander so base as could only ooze from “malice, malignity,” or amusing ignorance. If only they would resurrect Poe to teach his old university his knack of clear speech!

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Woodberry’s *Life of Poe*, American Men of Letters series.

This work was issued about 1886, when the last

of the Poe copyrights were expiring, and publishers saw their opportunity for creating a Poe revival. The only "Life" with pretensions to authority then available was that by Richard Henry Stoddard, its main points of interest being that the author was a poet and a "friend" of Poe. This biography by the learned gentleman who was appointed to a professorship in Columbia University soon after its appearance, was hailed as the long overdue standard "Life of Poe," and was duly applauded by the reviewers.

*Aqua  
pura  
from  
tainted  
wells.*

Mr. Woodberry frankly states that he bases his narrative upon, *inter alia*, Griswold's first sketch, printed when they were friends; Griswold's *Memoir*, written as Poe's literary executor, "and prefixed to the third volume of the original edition of Poe's 'Works,' 1850, but now suppressed"; and Stoddard's "Life." These "authorities," says Woodberry, "each...contains original matter peculiar to itself," a fact sufficiently indicated by his use of the "suppressed" *Memoir*. His perfectly proper claim to have given judicial consideration to the conflicting statements of the above and the other less important "authorities" is freely acknowledged. Not being a devotee of or versed in the mysteries of the legal profession, his limited acquaintance with the judicial function as exercised in different tribunals seems to explain the frigid atmosphere of his book. He picks up the culprit at the bar, which is to his stern eye as truly that of a saloon as of public opinion, and though

the case to be tried involves pathetic issues of fate and human frailty, this junior judge proceeds to handle the subtle as well as the coarser points as if he were a Master in Chancery unravelling technicalities in some pork packers' dispute over stock in a cold storage warehouse.

That one's personal verdict on this book may not be supposed to stand alone, though quite able to do so, I quote from a high literary authority, the *Atlantic Monthly*, in its review of the edition of Poe's works, edited by Stedman and Woodberry, and published in 1897. The article is headed "The New Poe."

"Of all men Poe had best reason to pray that he might be delivered from the hands of his friends. . . . (The disfavour with which he has been regarded) is chargeable to the extraordinary confusion of the man with his work—of the ethical with the purely literary aspect, which is so characteristic of literary judgments in this country. The puritanical twang is to be detected even in a study so conscientious as Prof. Woodberry's 'Life.' How deep rooted this cowardly persecuting spirit still is may be guessed from the fact that this valiant protester against it found it prudent to remain anonymous.

Woodberry's superior tone does not suffice to nickel-plate the brazen innuendo in such spurious coin as this sentence, following a schoolgirl's reminiscence of Poe, "it is curiously illustrative of the speed with which he *established a habit*

*Missing  
the work  
and  
hitting  
the man.*

*The  
major ex-  
communi-  
cation.*

*of intimacy* (our italics) with married women." This gem from his mine of "authorities" is all his little own, but it flashes far. About Poe's fame "has grown up an idealized legend." He "repeatedly forfeited prosperity, and even the homely honor of an honest name," this on the "authority" of Dr. English the convicted slanderer. Poe only "belonged to the men of culture instead of those of originally perfect power." The women friends of Poe—almost the only ones he ever had, and every one of them above the shadow of reproach from his enemies—"remained loyal to his memory," but their merely feminine weakness is nobly snuffed out by Woodberry, whose closing (death) sentence proclaims "the pitiful justice of Poe's fate, the dark immortality of his fame."

That the author of these elegant extracts has the advantage of poor Poe in that he "belongs to the men of originally perfect power" and not to mere gentlemen of culture is possibly true. That Prof. Woodberry is—or was—a powerful poet was impressed on the public mind by his cordial reviewers in the select literary papers, about the time his "power" produced the biography. The title, if memory serves, of his poetry book was "The North Shore Clock, and other Poems." It was pronounced a striking piece, but has not recently been heard in these Western parts, though Connecticut products as a rule are quite popular here.



The *International Encyclopaedia* has a full-dress article on Poe which deserves high praise for its fairness. The anonymous writer says that the poet's fondness for abnormal aspects of life and experience "places him in the ranks of the modern Decadents—whom he has deeply influenced—but he differs widely from the men who have followed his lead in the absolute purity of his thought and imagination."

*Simians  
aping  
Darwin.*

This is as admirable as it is true. The appalling traditions of cyclopædic writing are of course responsible for "placing" a defunct pioneer "in the ranks" of an awkward squad whose main title to notice is their smartness in trying to walk in the shoes of the out-of-reach leader "who deeply influenced them." Translated into Poe-prose the above passage reads thus, and succeeds in saying what the writer intended to when he started:

"Poe deeply influenced the modern Decadents, who wish to claim him as one in their ranks, but the vital fact is—in pretending to follow his lead, Poe's purity of thought and imagination is the one quality in which these degenerates have *not* followed him."

The latest Poe book is entitled, *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, India paper edition, four thin volumes, with introductions, Recollections of Poe by Richard Henry Stoddard, Biography by George Mercer Adams, contemporary estimates by Lowell and Willis, notes and illustrations.

*The Thin  
Poe.*

The paper is that of which Bibles and Prayer books are made, a delicate indication that the wheel is going round and may by and bye raise Poe among the saints in glory. The pages must be fingered by our breath.

Never seraph spread a pinion  
Made of fabric half so fair!

As all the press notices I notice with one voice chanted the praises of this tiny *de luxe* edition, it had to be secured. These comments shall be condensed to match. The Stoddard piece is, by rare good luck, the only portion of his defunct Memoir one wishes to help to immortality. The editor rightly introduces it as "a glimpse of Poe which has a personal value." Stoddard says he was twenty-one when he met Poe. At that time "Dr. Rufus Wilmot Griswold" was also his friend, "from whom I experienced nothing but personal kindness."

"Slight,  
pale,  
polite,  
elegant,  
luminous-  
eyed.

Keats, a certain English poet, also young, whose name was John, had written a popular poem, an "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Young Stoddard, with fine patriotic spirit, matched it with his own "Ode on a Grecian Flute," and sent it to Poe with generous permission for him to print it in the *Broadway Journal*, of which he was editor. After two impatient weeks Stoddard called about his "Flute." "I was struck with his polite manner toward me, and with the elegance of his appearance. He was slight and pale, with large luminous eyes." Two more weeks passed and then

this appeared in the *B. J.* "We doubt the originality of the 'Ode on a Grecian Flute,' for the reason that it is too good at some points to be so bad at others. Unless the author can reassure us we decline it."

The indignant stripling went boldly up to Goliath in his den, and spake these words:

"'Mr. Poe, I called to assure you that I *did* write the 'Ode on a Grecian Flute'.' Poe started, glared at me, and shouted—'You lie! get out of here, or I'll throw you out!'"

We can credit the act but not the English of the fastidious editor. Stoddard comes in here with his Grecian chorus—"Do I blame Poe? The gods forbid!" He had his reasons. Here follows his last word, a paragraph which is itself an imperishable Monument of the Nation's Poet and How it Spoiled him.

"I had glimpses of Poe afterward in the streets, but we never spoke. The last time that I remember to have seen him was in the afternoon of a dreary autumn day. A heavy shower had come up suddenly and he was standing under an awning. I had an umbrella, and my impulse was to share it with him on his way home, but something—certainly not unkindness—withheld me. I went on, and left him there in the rain, pale, shivering, miserable, the embodiment of his own

*"in the  
rain, pale,  
shivering,  
miserable,  
penniless,  
I went on  
and left  
him  
there."*

Unhappy master,  
Whom unmerciful disaster  
Followed fast, and followed faster.

There I still see him, and always shall—poor, penniless, but proud, reliant, dominant. May the gods forgive me! I can never forgive myself!”

We are free to choose our patrons, and one who plays to the gods does so because he is surer of their applause than are those who address the inferior parts of the house. The editors of this edition may for the moment have been under the influence of the gallery spirit when they entitled this Stoddard masterpiece “Meetings with Poe.” A finer literary sense might have suggested, “Stoddard’s Comedy and Tragedy Partings from Poe,” adorned with this couplet from his obituary poem on his famous friend,

“His faults were many,  
His virtues few.”

Next after this interesting “glimpse” follows a what-d’ye-call-it on Poe by George Mercer Adams, a name that in other of his work commands high respect. He appears to have been instructed to do Poe cannily, as the Scotch say, in seven pages, or rounds. Comments shall make way in favour of a few beauties. To illuminate the unavoidable parentheses of praise we have these side-lights. First round, first line; “Poe’s undisciplined, wayward....somewhat vagabond life ....His shiftless life, morally frail nature.” Round three; “his degenerate life and vagabond character....inherited tendency to irregular habits....given to affectation.” Round four; “lived

*Thinner  
and  
thinner  
still.*

solely by his pen (how degrading!) and in an erratic and Bohemian fashion....At no period was he known as a successful man."

Round five. "Put forth no personal effort to rise from a lower to a higher and nobler nature.... An ingrate to his best friends....Drink deadened his moral susceptibilities. (So glad to see the preacher admit that the poor wretch ever had any!) His work lacks inspiration of the helpful and ennobling order." Round seventh, the finish. "The end *finally* came (it usually comes *previously* in the muddled noddles of platitudinarian homilists in their seventhlies) when Poe, after a prolonged debauch....fell seriously ill and died."

One of the imperative duties of the owners of this India paper edition is to either cancel this word "debauch," or so strictly define it that the reader shall be in no doubt as to where the insinuation leads and ends. What "Imp of the Perverse" seduces publishers into the wild absurdity of setting radically prejudiced writers to hash up famous men, whose genius they are incapable of appreciating, and with whose characters and struggles they have no more sympathy than has a cat for its mouse?

The next duty of the editors is to join brain-forces quickly and labour until they learn the first of the A, B, C, facts in Poe's history, which is that his second name is spelt Allan and not Allen. Twenty years' familiarity with the matter war-rants the information, now made public, that

*Expert  
ignorance  
of Poe's  
name.*

three times in five Poe's name is misspelt in the public prints. This grand simplicity attains its climax in the pretty frontispiece picture in volume ii of this costly edition, which shows "the Allen house at Richmond, in which "both (!) Mr. and Mrs. Allen died." Efficient correctors of the press come high, it therefore behooves discreet issuers of exteriorly immaculate little volumes to sit up at nights rather than trust to the editorial talent of hard-worked printers. It is bare justice to announce that the names Edgar, and Poe, are correctly spelt, and two out of three right is an excellent record as times go. It has taken the English nation more than three hundred years to spell Shakespeare properly, and they are not sure of it yet. Marshal Frey, for thirty-five years head of the Baltimore police, published his "Reminiscences" in 1892, from which I learnt that Poe died in Washington! In this book, too, the name is ten times twisted into Allen. The page facsimiles of Poe's handwriting are greatly reduced, it would be well if so stated, lest it should mislead the young.

*Beatifica-  
tion ex  
cathedra.*

The *American Catholic Quarterly Review* of October, 1891, is treasured for its brilliant sixteen page eulogium of Poe, by W. O'Leary Curtis. A poetical heretic fly in amber so rich and old is no ordinary discovery, even if the *Review* did not awe us by its intimation that "it employs the highest order of literary talent available in this

country." A *Quarterly* is infallible by prescriptive right, and the literary genius of the present generation is so by right divine. Yet, overtopping all else, this particular number proudly exhibits, in Latin and English, the special Apostolic Benediction mailed to its staff by His Holiness the late Leo XIII, of noble memory and universal veneration.

We are taught some new news about Poe. First of all, "the poet was certainly of Irish descent." A good few steps, though, from his Norman ancestor who settled in Ireland in the reign of Henry II, about the year 1170. It will cheer the dulled spirit of the publishers of that nice little India paper edition to read, in this inspired scripture, that "things now look bad for Poe; Mrs. Allan was dead, Mr. Allen had married again." Here is a glorious lesson in the higher punctuation. "Can we wonder that a scene ensued? That the poet left the house in a rage? That Mrs. Allan complained to her husband of Poe's insolence? with the result that he was forbidden the house." A startling example of the wit-muddling effect of even a suspicion of alcohol in one's ink is worthy the attention of reformers; "He could not shake off the thralldom of the Drink Fiend. . . . The proprietor (of a certain magazine) regretted *him*, for on starting a new one *he* offered *him* its editorship, which *he* (not *him*) accepted."

It is comforting to read that Willis, Poe's friend and champion, was "a distinguished poet," while

*His  
"high-  
born  
kinsmen."*

*The  
"Leonainie"  
phantasm.*

"Mr. Stoddard" is only a person who "remarks." A certain favorite poet, neither a Poe nor a Willis, but who is entitled to rank as Laureate of the People, ought to be grateful for the rare honour and luck of so priceless an *A. C. Q. R.* introduction to St. Peter of the Gate, who, I fear, has by this time been soured against supplicants for free admission on the claim that they go Poe one better all round on the jingling lay.

James Whitcomb Riley manufactured a set of verses in the Poe vein twenty years ago which he called "Leonainie" and published in the equally euphoniously-named townlet, Kokomo. This anonymous piece was credited to Poe, despite its heroine's "eyes of bloomy moonshine." As recently as April, 1904, so eminent a man,—scientist, not poet—as the venerable Alfred Russel Wallace published this piece in the *Fortnightly Review* in London as a brand new discovery in Poe lore. "It was a mistake due to the folly of my youth that I ever wrote that poem," said Riley at the time, "and God knows I have suffered for it. There is nothing for me to do but acknowledge that I wrote it, as I do, but that does not stand, as I once denied being the author. I wrote it, but I did not. I did not write it, but I did, and am a liar any way you put it."

Now here I bring solace for both Wallace and Riley, absolution for Riley, encouragement for Wallace. Can there be higher human authority for Wallace's attribution of "Leonainie," to Poe,



and for relieving Riley of his mystification, than the Pronunciamento of the *A. C. Q. R.*? It runs thus, in much confusion of quotation marks: "This beautiful poem (quoted in full) is not to be found in any of the editions of Poe's works; and our opinion is that no edition should claim completeness without it. His poems are too few to allow the loss even of the most inconsiderable or least valuable; and certainly the above poem does not enter into that category; it has all the characteristics of Poe at his very best and we do not believe any other American poet could have written it."

*Posthumous Poe*  
"at his  
very best."

Although the *A. C. Q. R.* eulogist says, "it is very difficult to write anything new about the poetry of Poe," his genius makes light of the task. The widowed poet "wrote a requiem for his *dead* wife," a daring breach of the custom which confines requiems to the living, but in happy accord with newspaper etiquette or eloquence, which always draws our tears by telling how "the Dead Merchant's Body" is being brought home on the train, and the "Funeral of the Dead Millionaire" was mourned by the family of the thrice Dead Parent. A few other new things about Poe are the splitting of one of his poems into "Malume" and "Ulalume;" the making Siamese twins of two others, "For Annie and Lenore," and the beautifying of his "Ligeia" into "Ligeia."

If this *Q-R.* Poe curio is ever separately printed

it might help it along if entitled, "Paddy Poe; a judy-spree."

[The sub-title is in the French language.]

Edmund Clarence Stedman, on *Edgar Allan Poe*; "Poets of America." 1885.

*Edmund  
Clarence  
Stedman.*

In welcome contrast to the above citations from mediocre figures ill-affected towards their subject, stand two clear and noble utterances by men of insight and literary authority, Mr. Stedman first, and, later in time, Mr. Mabie. Occasion will ere long be taken, as intimated elsewhere, to try and pay in full the dues countless of Poe champions, here and across the water, to these distinguished representatives of American letters for their courageous, magnanimous, sympathetic, and influential vindications of a man too gifted and too delicately moulded to be understood by Demos, his flatterers and his servitors. I take a few words here and there from these fine discourses, as one sprinkles fragrant perfume over a mildewed carpet, that they may clear the fetid atmosphere which hangs over the ghoulish literature about Poe it has been our duty to examine. The too brief extracts are given without note or comment:

"Poe was unique among his fellows—so different from any other writer that America has produced as really to stand alone. He must have had genius to furnish even the basis for an ideal which excites this persistent interest. Yes, we are

on firm ground with relation to his genuineness as a poet."

"We begin to understand his spasmodic, versatile industry, his balks and breaks, his frequent poverty, despondency, self-abandonment, and almost to wonder that the sensitive feminine spirit—worshipping beauty and abhorrent of ugliness and pain; combatting with pride, with inherited disease of appetite—did not sooner yield, was not utterly overcome almost at the outset of these experiences."

*Maligners  
put to  
shame.*

"It is sad that disaster followed him even after death, in the vicious memoir which Griswold prefixed to his collected works. Poe should have had for his biographer a man of kind and healthy discernment."

"Poe was not a man of immoral habits.... He was not a libertine. Study and a love of the ideal protect men of his class against the sensuality by which many dull the zest of their appetites.... He was not an habitual drunkard, for a single glass made him the easy prey of any coarse and pitiless hands into which he might fall. He was a man inebriate when sober, his brain surging with emotion, and a stimulant that only served to steady common men bewildered him."

"It is just that well-balanced persons should rebuke the failings of genius. But let such an one imagine himself with a painfully sensitive organization—'all touch, all eye, all ear'—... with a frame in which health and success breed a dan-

gerous rapture, disease and sorrow a fatal despair. Surmount all this with a powerful intelligence that does not so much rule the structure as it menaces it and threatens to shake it asunder....He too might find his judgment a broken reed....I have said to friends as they sneered at the ill-managed life of one whose special genius perhaps could not exist but in union with certain infirmities, that instead of recounting these, and deriding them, they should hedge him round with their protection. We can find more than one man of sense in a thousand, but how rarely a poet with such a gift!"

---

Hamilton Wright Mabie, on "*Poe's Place in American Literature.*" 1903.

*Hamilton  
Wright  
Mabie.*

At the unveiling of the idealized bust of Poe in the University of Virginia Mr. Mabie delivered the address which deservedly occupies the place of honour in Prof. Harrison's Virginia edition of Poe's works. It is a dispassionate presentation of the state of American literature before Poe appeared. Other poets had their precursors, he had none. Criticism worthy of the name was unknown until he revealed its spirit and purpose.

"Poe is inexplicable. He remains the most sharply defined personality in our literary history. His verse and imaginative prose stand out in bold relief against a background which neither suggests nor interprets them. One may go further, and

affirm that both verse and prose have a place by themselves in the literature of the world."

"He is distinctively and in a unique sense the artist in our literature, the man to whom beauty was a constant and sufficient justification of itself."

"He was far in advance of the civilization in which he lived, in his discernment of the value of beauty to men struggling for their lives in a world full of ugliness because full of all manner of imperfection. . . . In older countries, looking at our life outside the circle of its immediate needs and tasks, he has found a recognition often denied him among his own people. . . . The judgment of English, French, and German critics has been, as a whole, unanimous in accepting Poe at a much higher valuation than has been placed upon him at home, where Lowell's touch-and-go reference in the 'Fable for Critics' has too often been accepted as an authoritative and final opinion from the highest literary tribunal."

"In the disconnected product of his broken life there is not a line to be blotted out on the score of vulgarity, lack of reticence, or even commonplaceness. In his most careless imaginative writing the high quality of his mind is always apparent. . . . In his worst estate the great traditions of art were safe in his hands."

*Poe's  
poetical  
suprem-  
acy.*

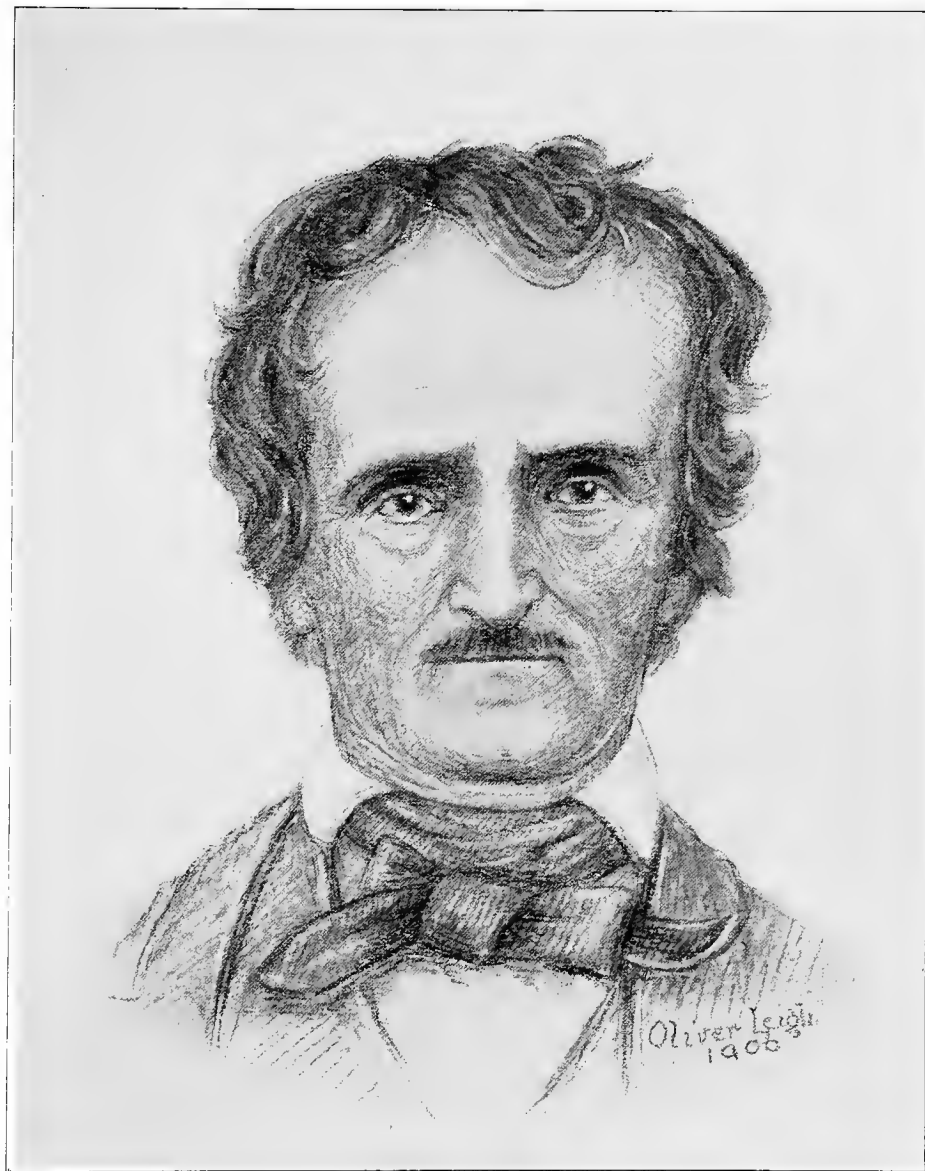
IV  
POE'S  
"PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION"

and how it was used to grind

THE ORGAN.

If it is possible that there still exist any innocents past puberty who have never sinned in the direction of verse making, they are pretty sure to succumb when they encounter the temptation of this wicked essay. Our wide-awake generation rather prides itself on thinking it has robbed the glorious soaring scriptures of pious antiquity of their lofty inspiration, heedless of its worse stupidity in whittling it into picayune aureolas for every rhymester of the hour. There is at least dignity in the olden faith. Faith in the inspiration of modern poetry is a charming nursery delusion. Grant that the very noblest modern thoughts, impressively phrased, bear some traces of being touched by an angel's wing, be assured that the wafter "flourished" in far away ages, for there is nothing new under the sun, and even our finest poetic moonshine is a second-hand light.

That Poe's essay is wicked, as inspiring artless youth with the art-craft of verse and worse, is



THE WIDOWER YEAR PORTRAIT, page 15.

*It fell  
Upon me with the touch of Hell.  
—"Tamerlane."*





obvious to the philosophic mind. And how cruel! When we scan the portraits of our poets, posing and imposing in lovely studio designs, the great Smith, with bulbous head leaning on the prop of that inspired right hand; the afflatussed Jones, with eyes in fine frenzy glaring; and the *pro tem.* immortal Miffkins, bowed with cogibundity of cogitation as a shirtless bust after the antique, we gaze in blithering awe at their inspired expression, caught by happy snapshots at the psychological moment. Then comes Poe, unearthliest of his tribe, and gives away, gratis, the secret tricks of their artful workshops.

*Every  
man his  
own  
Poe.*

Our verse-founders and tinkers will never confess their debts to Poe for ideas, for designs, for word-forms, melody, witchery, etc. For that matter he was no more scrupulous than they are in picking up trifles from owners, less expert than himself in knowing their value, than were Shakespeare and Tennyson, "Longfellow, and other plagiarists," as he calls them.

We their readers, adorers, and customers, are vastly indebted to Poe for lifting the lid of the sacred inkpot, and disclosing the business recipes by which prose bread is converted into Poesie pie or Angel cake.

In this most unique of essays Poe tells the apprentice how to make new poetry out of stale ideas, "keeping originality *always* in view," says he. To show how he did it himself he selects "The 'Raven,' as most generally known," which

*What's  
in a  
Word?*

he transfigured into a Bird of Paradise. He smiles away the attribute of spasmodic inspiration.

First, he decided that a perfect poem must not much exceed a hundred lines. Beauty being the finest theme or impression to be conveyed, he sought for its highest manifestation and found it in sadness. Next he reasoned that for a striking artistic effect there should be a refrain, its force being enhanced if it can be a single word. Everything depends on this word's sound, and the nature of it must correspond. The word "Nevermore" met these conditions.

Who shall reiterate this melancholy musical word? If some non-reasoning creature capable of speech could utter it, the effect would be doubly weird. Poe had reviewed the current monthly parts of Dickens's "Barnaby Rudge" three or four years earlier, and had exhibited his marvellous power of insight by foretelling in reasoned detail what the then unwritten continuation and ending of the plot must be. Dickens said on reading this analysis that the writer must either be Poe or the devil. From this book Poe borrowed the Raven, of which he had said in his review that, "amusing as it is, it might have been made, more than we now see it, a portion of the conception of the fantastic Barnaby. Its croaking might have been prophetically heard in the course of the drama. Its character might have performed . . . much the same part as does, in music, the accompaniment in respect to the air."

Having now worked it out that this weird chant of sadness should point a story of exquisite grief, he naturally employed a lover, bewailing the death of his sweetheart, as the central figure. With his unerring artistic instinct Poe gave a background of splendor to this scene of woe, and the piquant touch of incongruous absurdity and humor by making the uncanny bird enter by the window and behave like a compound of owl and parrot. "It is not until the very last line of the very last stanza, that the intention of making the Raven emblematical of Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance is permitted to be seen." Here ends the true history of a great poem, yet many, very many, perhaps a majority of the writers about Poe and his "Raven" in my earlier reading years believed, or affected to believe, that this essay was no more than a grave hoax. Possibly there are persons interested in poetry as a business who still strive to ridicule it as a jest. In the course of a lively discussion many years ago, in which I contended that a perfect epigram or short poem must be written backwards, from climax to title, I made notes for a someday experiment on these lines. Two decades have passed since the following piece of verse was—manufactured—as the result, which is now printed for the first time. Without the slightest pretence to be more than the mechanical product it is, put here just for what it may be worth, it may, perhaps, be allowed the humble

*Weaker  
poets  
never  
tell  
how.*

merit of illustrating two whimsical notions—which may be erroneous:

1. That it is the first avowed attempt to fashion a piece on the theory and model (in a general way) set up by Poe, solely as an experiment;

2. That, within the writer's recollection, no poet except Adelaide Procter, in "The Lost Chord," seems to have tackled this most alluring subject, the Organ.

# THE ORGAN

A

FANTASIE

*in the manner of Poe's "Raven,"  
suggested by his avowal  
of method.*

I.

Lonely in the sordid city,  
where they know no rest nor pity,  
Where they spare no time for pity  
o'er the loss of aught but Gold;  
Wintry mist and sleet were falling,  
all my bitter woes recalling,  
Hideous gloom my soul appalling—  
griefs that never can be told;  
There and thus I paced, scarce knowing  
whitherward my steps were going,  
Chill blasts through my heart-core blowing,  
till its throb beat faint and cold.

II.

From the stroke of Fate still reeling,  
pain of loss still fiercely feeling,  
Pangs I bore past human healing  
that no anodyne can quell;  
Death my life-long Love had taken,  
nevermore from sleep to waken,  
Till my vacant heart forsaken  
is but Hope's sepulchral cell,  
For the shadow friends that flattered  
fond youth-dreams are faded, scattered,  
And—a soul's ambition shattered—  
Life is death and earth is hell!

## III.

Dazed with dread, as one demented,  
through the streets by throngs frequented,  
On I sped, by none prevented  
for I knew not they were there;  
Naught recked I of mien or bearing,  
for no flippant mocker caring,  
Sorrow's mask my face was wearing,  
dial of profound despair,—  
Suddenly, my gaze surprising,  
down a nook the mist disguising,  
Lo—a sombre Abbey, rising  
grandly from its grassy square.

## IV.

Glamoured by the view before me,  
came a holy impulse o'er me,  
As an angel might implore me  
straightway in the shrine to go.  
Haven-like the Abbey seeming,  
with its gorgeous windows gleaming,  
Rainbow rays of glory streaming  
through the mist upon the snow,  
Shadows with the radiance blending,  
to the fane a weirdness lending,  
Through my soul a rapture sending—  
rapture only martyrs know.

## V.

Slow I paced within the portal,  
o'er the bones of many a mortal,  
Yearners for the Fame Immortal  
through the aid of famous tomb;  
Marbled ghosts of worthies saintly  
shadowed 'neath the archways quaintly,  
As the distant tapers faintly  
glimmered through the deepening gloom,  
And my footfalls in the vaulted  
transept echoed, so I halted  
'Mong the lowly and exalted,  
mingled there to bide their doom.

## VI.

On my knees devoutly sinking,  
whelmed with awe, my spirit shrinking,  
Lone and strange, I fell a-thinking,  
thinking o'er the drift of creeds;  
Strange, this monumental glory,  
graced with epitaphic story,  
Beams on those whose hands were gory,  
warriors boasting ruthless deeds!  
Strange that Churches carve no niches  
for God's saints unblest with riches,  
Who through city dens and ditches  
carry cheer where Lazarus bleeds.

## VII.

Ah, for victors, not the failing,  
for the strong and not the ailing,  
For the joyous, not the wailing,  
are the cenotaph and shrine.  
Victim I of heart's privation,  
weary in my desolation,  
Fate I face with resignation,  
dark oblivion be mine!  
Prostrate 'mid the vanquished lying,  
dead, dear Love, sweet Hope a-dying,  
Grief my soul is crucifying—  
O for endless Rest divine!

## VIII.

Thus in bitterest agony quaking,  
and my sob the silence breaking,  
I my course was vaguely taking  
thence my footsteps to retrace,—  
From a ghastly tombstone fluttered  
forth a ghoulish Thing that muttered,  
Though I caught not what it uttered  
as its flapping froze my face—  
“Back! thou Vampire! hellish minion!  
off me take thy cursed pinion!  
Loose me from thy dread dominion!  
Spare me in this holy place!”



## IX.

And I fell in swoon thus shrieking,  
horrored sweat my forehead reeking,  
Madly sanctuary seeking  
from the Demon of Despair!

\* \* \* \* \*

Lo, what strange supernal yearning!  
tortured brain to peace returning,  
Secrets of the grave discerning  
as I lay entranced there,  
Dimly hearing songs of sorrow  
heart of grace from daybreak borrow,  
Till the pæans of the morrow  
woke to joy the midnight air.

## X.

Like to vague melodious noises  
wafted from far-distant voices—  
Spell that quails us or rejoices  
as we rede its omen plain—  
Now there hurtled round me mystic  
shouts and cries antagonistic,  
All their meanings cabalistic  
frenzying my fevered brain,  
Prelude of the human choir,  
strugglers panting as they tire,  
Madly gasping "Higher! Higher!"—  
wild Ambition's discord strain.

## XI.

Soon the hubbub hum subsided,  
sweetly to an anthem glided,  
Joining voices long divided  
by the severing service-bell.  
Chords majestic grandly pealing  
thrilled my soul with fervid feeling,  
And in heart communion kneeling  
holy transports o'er them fell,  
As the teeming nations, bent all  
in devotion sacramental,  
In one glorious worship blent—  
"All people that on earth do dwell."

## XII.

Hark! the noble Psalm's stupendous  
unison breaks in tremendous  
Booming salvo sounds that rend us  
with a fearsome thrill of dread;  
Roar and crash of mighty thunders  
heralding the dawn of wonders,  
When the Veil of mystery sunders  
and the flaming sky glows red—  
"*Dies iræ*"—direful warning!  
woe to those its terrors scorning!  
Father! mercy that Last Morning  
when Thou judgest quick and dead!

## XIII.

Through the long reverberation,  
warning death-knell of creation,  
When in woe of desolation  
earth and firmament shall parch,  
Glad I heard a chaunt inspiring,  
with a chivalrous desiring,  
Buoyant hearts' high ardour firing  
Youth for life's laborious march;  
"Onward Christian Soldiers!" chorus,  
Duty's clarion call sonorous,  
Heaven's bright rainbow banner o'er us,  
Hope the keystone of the arch.

## XIV.

Melting strains, of Peace the token,  
dulcet harmonies unbroken,  
Sighs of yearning love unspoken  
like the sighings of the sea;  
Soft Æolian zephyrs waving  
fill my soul with love enslaving,  
Rapturous, transcendent craving,  
languishing in ecstasy—  
O thou loved and lost One! treasure  
loved and longed for past all measure,  
More than worlds of gain and pleasure,  
more than life thy Love to me!

## XV.

Lo, from out the seraph-singing,  
high aloft its lost way winging,  
Trilled a wondering linnet, ringing  
loud its luring roundelay.  
Harbinger of heaven—I hear thee!  
echo-voice of love, I hear thee!  
O my lost One! to be near thee  
now I passionately pray!  
Bid these beckoning wings to carry  
through yon azure ether starry  
Me to Thee! why do I tarry—  
why thus lonely lingering stay?

## XVI.

But afar the winged voice floated  
to the darkness, where the bloated  
Ghoulish gargoyles grinned and gloated  
o'er my woe in fiendish glee,  
And there came a sad intoning,  
a forlorn despondent groaning,  
Like to dying souls bemoaning  
taunts of gnawing memory,  
And the “Stabat Mater’s” rending  
tones, all mortal grief transcending,  
Wailed the mourning Mother, bending  
prone at mystic Calvary.

## XVII.

What is life? a melody, joyous  
while its hopeful harmonies buoy us,  
Until discords dire destroy us  
and the echoes die in pain,  
Save the "still small voice" imparted  
to console the breaking-hearted,  
Whispering, "Blest are the departed,"  
for the Rest divine they gain.  
Happy resting after roaming!  
happier calm when waves cease foaming,  
Sweet the wearied warrior's homing,  
Peace eternal after pain!

## XVIII.

Hark! the piercing call to battle,  
to brave duty in life's battle,  
Where the wounding weapons rattle  
where the fighters furious rave.  
Ah! ere the victor's sword is sheathed,  
ere his brow is laurel wreathed,  
The hero's dying sigh is breathed—  
conquests cannot heroes save,  
Sound your pæans! flaunt your trophies!  
What in death avail your trophies?  
What your proud triumphal strophes  
but Grand Marches to the grave?

## XIX.

Hush! 'tis muted music, guiding  
 yon long phantom-phalanx, gliding  
 Through the gloom, their faces hiding  
 'neath grim Retribution's pall;  
 Grinning wraiths of Faiths long slighted,  
 Loves long lost, loves unrequited,  
 Youthtide Hopes forever blighted—  
 see them to their limbo crawl!  
 Chaunting ghastly charnel dirges  
 as Remorse their conscience scourges,  
 Loathing death that never merges  
 in Nirvana's holy thrall.

## XX.

Now from out the darkness lowering  
 bursts a mighty, overpowering  
 "ALLELUIA!" heavenward towering,  
 leaping like the storm-lashed sea!  
 And a glow of golden glory,  
 a resplendent godlike glory,  
 Bathed in bliss the Abbey hoary  
 with a dazzling brilliancy—  
 And I woke!  
*and lo, soft gleaming,  
 in the hallowed glamour beaming,  
 Thrilled a lordly ORGAN, dreaming  
 drowsy incense-minstrelsy.*

\* \* \*

Its minstrels are our angel loves  
 who waft each throbbing chord;  
 And the rolling of its thunders  
 the Voice of God the Lord!



HIS MONUMENT

## HIS MONUMENT

Reprinted, slightly changed, from the *New York Critic*, 1888.

In New York's Central Park four statues stand,  
Four Poets, prized in (though not of) our land;  
First, SHAKESPEARE, bare legs, shaky spear in shape,  
Chill though his shanks he sports a needless cape.  
Next, stiff-necked BURNS, with milksop face, sits squat,  
And, squeamish, squirms in fear of scowling SCOTT.  
Elsewhere, to soothe Hibernian beholders,  
Tom MOORE's squeezed in by just his head and  
shoulders.

These honours done to bards born t'other side,  
Two sops are flung to patriotic pride—  
Fitz HALLECK fidgets in his painful seat;  
WASHINGTON IRVING's busted counterfeit  
Stands—where the parrots and the monkeys meet!

Where stands the monument that tells  
Of our chief chimer of immortal "BELLS"?  
Fate-stricken soul! lover of Annabel Lee,  
Has cold New York no sculptured pile for thee?  
To foreigners are her best favours shown—  
Her STARS for them, her STRIPES for thee alone?  
Give native genius, living, stones for bread,  
And grudge its deathless fame one stone when dead!

O Genius rare! O poet without peer  
Among the native throng, thy craft-kin rear  
Their ill-wrought columns to their MASTER's name;  
No Crown they bring, no place for thee they claim  
In Gotham's Barnum-Jumbo "HALL OF FAME:"  
Thrice blest at last! avenged on every foe,  
The MARTYR views the Pigmies' bust of POE!









